



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0523

April 28, 2020

The Honorable Chad Wolf
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
500 C Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Wolf,

I write in strong support for the application submitted by the Kern County Fire Department (KCFD) for \$2,995,200 in funding from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) program. With AFG grant funding, KCFD will acquire updated Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) equipment, which will significantly improve KCFD's current response capabilities.

Kern County is the third largest county in California and spans over 8,000 square miles, comprising 11 incorporated cities and 41 unincorporated communities. KCFD contracts with the State of California to be the first response for over one million acres of state land and responds to an average of 3,000 fires per year, including over 1,000 structural fires. Personnel protective equipment—like SCBA platforms, masks, and cylinders—have been identified as a key need by KCFD and current equipment is only compliant with the 2002 update to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standard 1981 Contained Breathing Apparatus, not the 2008, 2013, or 2018 guidelines.

As you know, California has recently suffered some of the largest, most destructive and deadly wildfires in the state's history. In Kern County, the 2016 Erskine Fire torched 47,864 acres, destroyed 309 buildings and took the lives of two individuals. Proper personal protective equipment for fire personnel is critical to a safe and timely response, and AFG funding will help equip KCFD personnel with updated equipment to enhance their ability to respond to residential fires, as well as full-scale wildfires. If awarded grant funding, KCFD estimates its firefighters will see an increase of oxygen supply from 30 minutes to 45 minutes.

Again, I strongly support this request of \$2,995,200 in grant funding submitted by the KCFD to improve both the safety of my constituent firefighters responding to emergencies and their ability to combat fires to protect the residents of Kern County. It is my understanding that KCFD's grant application encompasses the intent of the AFG program: to protect the health and safety of public first responder personnel against fire and fire-related hazards. I respectfully ask for your thorough review and consideration of this application.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kevin McCarthy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a prominent "K" and "M".

KEVIN McCARTHY
Member of Congress